



# NEWS RELEASE

April 27, 2010

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **STATEMENT OF HARRY K. THOMAS, JR. AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES UPON THE PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS TO HER EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO**

It is a great honor to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines.

The United States has a long and deep relationship with the Philippines, a treaty ally whose soldiers and sailors have fought alongside ours in World War II and subsequent conflicts. We remember and honor their sacrifices on many occasions, some of which take place at the largest U.S. military cemetery outside the United States, where 17,201 U.S. and Filipino heroes of WWII are buried and the names of 36,286 missing in action are inscribed.

With some 2.5 million Filipino-Americans living in the United States, more than 100,000 Americans residing in the Philippines, and numerous cultural and educational exchange programs between our countries, the vibrant ties between our two peoples enhance mutual understanding. The Philippines was the second country to receive Peace Corps Volunteers in the early 1960s, and today, 130 Peace Corps volunteers work in 40 provinces of the Philippines, strengthening public education, guiding youth, and helping communities conserve their natural resources and environment.

Manila is home to the only U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs office and healthcare clinic outside the United States and in the past year, over \$157 million in one-time benefits honoring heroic Filipino veterans of WWII have been paid out. And every year, over \$340 million in veterans and Social Security benefits are paid out to beneficiaries in the Philippines. New buildings being constructed on Embassy compounds will soon offer faster and more efficient services to visa applicants, American citizens, and veterans.

The United States and the Philippines share common values and common goals designed to make our world more secure and more prosperous. We cooperate closely on regional security, counterterrorism, and in combating transnational crime, including the scourge of trafficking in persons. Our militaries work together on important issues such as disaster relief, maritime security, defense reform, and human rights. The Philippines contributes to vital global peacekeeping missions, and recently joined the international community in offering disaster-relief expertise to earthquake-stricken Haiti. Holding the Presidency of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference, the Philippines has made important strides toward reaching a consensus at that landmark international meeting.

The Philippines played a key role in developing the ASEAN Charter, and has been outspoken in calling for political reform and respect for human rights in Burma. As the ASEAN dialogue partner for the U.S., the Philippines is a key actor in the partnership between ASEAN and the USG, and has helped reinvigorate U.S. engagement with Southeast Asia in 2009 -- culminating in a successful, first-ever U.S.-ASEAN Summit.

Our two governments work together to open markets, protect intellectual property rights, fight corruption, and encourage economic growth and development. I am proud that the United States is the largest development grant donor, one of the largest investors, and the number one trading partner to the Philippines.

I believe our historic relationship with the Philippines will continue to flourish as we pursue our common vision of peace, stability, and prosperity. I look forward to working with the government and the people of the Philippines to deepen our excellent relationship and to expand our cooperation into new areas of mutual interest.

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